



OFFICE *of the* ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

December 17, 2002

Mr. Tim Molina
Assistant Attorney General
Assistant Public Information Coordinator
Office of the Attorney General
Post Office Box 12548
Austin, Texas 78711-2648

OR2002-7220

Dear Mr. Molina:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 174122.

The Crime Victims' Compensation Division of the Office of the Attorney General (the "OAG") received a request for information relating to the requestor's client's claim for compensation. You claim that the submitted incident report is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information. We assume that, to the extent it exists, the OAG has released any remaining information that is responsive to this request. If not, then the OAG must do so at this time. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302; Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000).

Section 552.108(a)(1) excepts from disclosure information held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime if release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. Section 552.108 only applies to a law enforcement agency or a prosecutor. We note that where an incident involving allegedly criminal conduct is still under active investigation or prosecution, section 552.108 may be invoked by any proper custodian of information that relates to the incident. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 474 (1987), 372 (1983); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 586 (1991) (need of another governmental body to withhold requested information may provide compelling reason for nondisclosure under section 552.108).

You have provided a letter from an assistant city attorney for the City of Austin stating that the submitted incident report pertains to a pending criminal investigation. The city further states that release of the submitted information "would be detrimental to the investigation"

and requests that the incident report not be released. Based on these representations and our review of the submitted incident report, we agree that the release of the submitted information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. Thus, the OAG may withhold the submitted incident report from disclosure based on section 552.108(a)(1).

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Karen A. Eckerle".

Karen A. Eckerle
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KAE/sdk

Ref: ID# 174122

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Edward F. Hensley
Attorney & Counselor At Law
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(w/o enclosures)